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THE END OF THE AGE

A SERIES OF PROPHETIC BIBLE STUDIES
UPON THE END OF THIS PRESENT AGE

BY
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121st Thousand

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INTRODUCTION

Christ's Story of the Age-End

(MATTHEW 24.)

God had been laying bare the future to Daniel. As page after page of startling events unrolled, Daniel's heart was sobered and solemnized. He cries out to God (Dan. 12:8):

"Oh my Lord, what shall be
the end of these things"

How fitting is this question for ourselves. To-day the pages of the world's history are swiftly unrolling. They are red with blood. Kingdoms are rising and falling in a night. Thrones are tottering. Armies are battling in earth, sea and sky. The sons of men are being slaughtered by millions. Civilization is shot through with the barbarism and savagery of by-gone ages. The foundations of human government and society are reeling under earthquake blows. "Men's hearts are failing them for fear" of the things that are coming upon the earth. And with Daniel they are crying out

"What shall be the end of these things?"

There is only one answer. There is only one man who knows what the end will be. That man is—the God-Man. Jesus Christ alone knows the future. We must come to Him if *we* would

know. So, like them of old, let us sit at His feet and listen to—

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Christ's Story of the Age-End.

You remember the story. His disciples had been showing Him the great temple. They had pointed out to Him its lofty pinnacles, its rich adornments, its massive stones. And then the Lord turns to them and quietly says: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Doubtless they were amazed, and perplexed. I can fancy them saying one to another, "Tomorrow we will go up to the Mount of Olives with Him. There we will sit at His feet and hold sweet communion as is our wont. Let us ask Him then what He means by this strange remark." So when they had come to the Mount and the Master was seated, they say,

"Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age."

* * * *

The Double Question.

Note that they asked of Him a double question. There is a line of cleavage between the first clause and the second. First, "*When shall these things be?*" And by "these things" they meant the downfall of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the temple of which He had just spok-

en, a disaster which was to take place in less than a half century from that time. Second, they asked Him, "*What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?*" a dual event which has not yet taken place, and which is separated from the first named catastrophe by almost two thousand years of time. Thus His answer covers events separated by a gap of many centuries simply because their question refers to both. The answer is thus not discordant in its time relations. It is in perfect harmony with the question asked. The same line of cleavage in the disciples' interrogation appears therefore in Christ's answer. It cuts that answer sharply in twain between the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of this chapter. The first fourteen verses have to do with the first clause of their inquiry, "When shall these things be?" The remainder of the chapter is His reply to the second clause, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" Let us now note that He answers the first half by giving *the general signs of the present age*, and the second half by naming the *special signs of the end of the age*.

The General Signs of the Present Age.

(The Question)

"*When shall these things be*" (v. 3).

(The Answer)

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows."

Wars and rumors of wars: nation rising against nation: kingdom against kingdom: earthquakes: famines: pestilences: afflictions—what a marvelous picture is this of the age which has passed since Jesus Christ sat upon the Mount and told this wondrous story! If our Lord had been sitting as a historian now, sketching the centuries that have rolled past, instead of a prophet predicting events to come, He could not have more accurately shown forth the marks of all the age since He first came. We say the marks of *the age*, not the special signs of *the end* of the age. For it is *the general characteristics of the whole age from His first coming to His coming again* that He here gives before He sets forth the *special* signs which shall mark its end. Do we not often make a mistake here? When empires rise and fall, when great nations are in commotion and conflict: when giant armies and steel-clad navies await each others' deadly onset: when gaunt famine devastates whole nations, and wasting pestilence follows swiftly in its wake: when this old globe pulsates under the terrifying throb of mighty earthquakes—when these things come to pass men cry out, "The end of the world is at hand!" Yet of these things Jesus says distinctly that though they shall come "*the end is not yet.*" They are not the distinguishing marks of the

end-time. They are rather the common marks of the whole time since Christ was on earth. Not a single century has fled since He walked the earth which has not been marked by all the characteristic events he mentions here. They are the ear-marks of the whole age, but in no sense the special signs of its end.

There must be then *some special sign which marks the end*. It is some sign which the world has never before seen. It must be so peculiar to the end that men shall at once know it when it appears as the startling, distinguishing mark that the age-end is now come. "What shall be *the sign of Thy coming* and of the end of the age," is their earnest and deeply interested question. So now He proceeds to answer this momentous question, an answer final, decisive, and vital to the whole question of unfulfilled New Testament prophecy.

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The SPECIAL SIGNS of THE END of the Age.

(The Question)

"What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?"

(The Answer)

"When ye (v. 15) therefore shall see THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand), then let them which be in Judæa flee unto the mountains for then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION."

And now we have come to the crucial point in Christ's answer. Up from the heart of the chapter here starts God's great finger-post which points with unerring accuracy to the end. Now Jesus Christ begins to deal with a personality of momentous and tragic importance as the supreme sign of the end-time. And He opens this last act in the great drama of the age-end by citing this strange and mysterious figure. Out from the prophecies of God over which centuries of time had already rolled He causes to emerge this strange figure upon which He puts His finger as one supreme, vital fact which fore-runs and determines the end. "When ye shall see *THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION*"—that is the mysterious phrase with which He brings us face to face with the pivotal-point of the end. What does He mean? He cites it as though it were to them a familiar fact. He says it was "spoken of by Daniel the prophet." Let us follow the clue He indicates.

The Anti-Christ.

If we turn to the last chapter of the prophecy named (Daniel 12:11) we will note the interesting fact that centuries before Daniel had asked of the Lord the same question the disciples had just put to Christ: "*O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?*" And then God places His finger upon this same strange figure to which Christ has referred and says to Daniel that

"From the time that.....the Abomination that maketh desolate is set up," until the end shall be a certain period of somewhat over three and a half years.

Thus when Daniel asks as to the end God points him to an ominous figure called Abomination of Desolation and tells Daniel that this portentous personage marks the end-time. When His apostles ask as to the end Jesus Christ puts His finger upon this very same mark and tells them that when they see "the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" then the fierce crisis of all history is upon them. So, this mark suddenly revealed in the temple constitutes the crucial mark of the age-end so near at hand, yea, even then begun.

Is there anything else in the New Testament which tells us that some portentous personage must appear before the time when the Son of God appears in the glory of His manifestation? Assuredly there is. For Paul, when speaking of this very glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, says exactly the same thing. He declares explicitly that before that great event there must be revealed another personage, even as Daniel and Christ have already stated before him. *"For that day,"* (the day of Christ) says he (2 Thess. 2:3) *"shall not come except * * * the Man of Sin be revealed."*

Up from the mists and shadows of the ending age, like some colossal spectre is

to start a mighty figure of sin and wickedness whose ominous outline against the twilight sky of the centuries is the sure and unfailing sign of the end-time to which this world is swiftly and inevitably wheeling. Paul tells us his name. He is the Man of Sin. He is the incarnation of sin even as God's spotless Christ was the incarnation of holiness. He is the Anti-Christ. He is an abomination; he is a desolator; he sitteth in the temple of God; he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God; he is a false king and a false God; he shall be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's own glorious coming.

Thus a divine hand underscores this fifteenth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and marks as the first certain sign of the end

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The Sign of the Anti-Christ and Tribulation

For under him shall come the World's great crisis time, her hour of gloom and darkness: a time of tribulation such as she has never seen since her creation. It is the lips of the Master Himself which speak this word with simple and searching admonition.

"For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time....." (v. 21).

Daniel, Christ on the Mount of Olives, and Its Scope. Paul, in the passages cited, all make the Man of Sin to be manifested in the "holy place," evidently the temple at Jerusalem. The fury of the tribulation tempest bursts forth there, and it is "them that dwell in Judea" whom Christ warns to flee at once to the mountains. But the storm is clearly not localized there. It is world-wide, as the thirteenth chapter of Revelation plainly shows. For there we are told (verses 7 and 8) that "it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Mark too the urgency of flight as Christ warns them of the coming of trial. The appearance of the Its Urgency. Abomination of Desolation in the temple becomes to the inhabitants of Judea the signal for instant, undelaying flight. Life is in instant jeopardy. They are to let nothing deter them from speedy escape. Christ multiplies figures to show the necessity of this. The man who is on the house-top is not to come down to take anything from his home within. He is to rush to the outside stairway which leads to the ground from the roof of the oriental house, and thus make his escape by the shortest way. Here is a ploughman who has laid aside his garment while he ploughs his field. He is not to return to the end of his furrow to don his garment but is to hasten at once to take flight. The

tender infirmities of motherhood will make the escape more difficult and tardy. They are to pray that they may not have to flee in winter with the added suffering of climatic exposure. And also that their flight may not be on the Sabbath Day. For the limit of its journey was less than a mile, and they dare not let religious scruples stay their journey to a Sabbath Day limit, when every necessity of the hour of peril was calling them not to stop short of the most remote and sequestered fastness of the towering gloomy mountains toward which they were fleeing.

Then follows a brief, graphic word as to the sharpness of this time of test. *Great tribulation,*" says the Master (v. 21) "*such as was not* *Its Intensity.* *since the beginning of the world* *to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*" Mark's simple narrative is still more striking. "*Such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.*" The world shall reel and stagger in the throes of such a trial-time as it never has known since it came from the creative hand of God. Against all this is quickly brought the charge of pessimism. It is a cheap and easy one. But it hardly meets the issue. For these words are not the forecast of an alarmist steeped in the gloom of his own temperament, dark with the hopelessness of his own despair. They are the words of the Son of God Himself, pointing

down the vista of the centuries to coming events. Thoughtful men see today such problems in social, moral, industrial and political life as the world has never faced in all its history. Underneath them all lie powers volcanic in their possibilities of destructiveness. Rose-hued prophets of the world say they will all be solved. Jesus Christ says they are heading up in an appalling crisis. Men would better give heed to His warning than some day to awake in the very vortex of the tempest which they have been too blind to see, too unbelieving to heed.

Notice also that Christ says the time of this tribulation shall be curtailed.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

So fierce will be the time of affliction that all flesh would perish if it ran on indefinitely.

Its Shortness. But for the sake of His own who may be in it God shortens the duration of it. Queen Victoria reigned above sixty years. One of Europe's monarchs has even passed that extreme. Twenty or thirty years is quite a common period for kings to reign. But if we turn to Rev. 13, we see how strikingly this word is true about the Man of Sin, the tribulation king. There (v. 5) we are told that "power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." There is every reason to believe that this is a literal fact, and that three years and

a half are the actual duration of his reign. This strikingly conforms and illumines Christ's statement as to the shortening of the tribulation time.

As these dark days drag along men will under them begin to long as never before for the coming of the true Christ who shall terminate the *Its False Christs.* power of the false one. So Satan, ever ready deceiver, will endeavor to befool men by the appearance of counterfeit Christs. The Lord Jesus gives warning against these. Then He gives the test by which they may unerringly be unmasked. "As the lightning cometh. and shineth. so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Men shall cry out that the Christ has come and that He is in the "desert" or the "secret chambers." But Jesus says that His coming will not be behind the walls of any secret chamber, nor in the loneliness of some sequestered desert. He is to come with all the visible and open splendor of the lightning which flashes forth its white glory before the wondering eyes of all the world. Hence the call to go out to meet an alleged Christ in the desert or the secret chambers is in its very self proof of imposture. Secrecy here is the manifest stamp of spuriousness.

And now when the tribulation is ended what is the sign which follows? The Word of God is very clear here—

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light."
(v. 29).

The sequence of the signs is clear. "*Immediately after the tribulation*" the second sign follows, namely:

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The Heavenly Sign.

God veils the sun and moon in that strange, shadowing semi-gloom that makes the total eclipse fill men's hearts with solemn awe. This is the second sign. Not set up in the temple of Judæa, localized to the land as is the Abomination of Desolation, but hung out in the over-arching heavens where every eye upon earth can see it. The prophet Joel plainly speaks of this same sign and puts it where Christ does, *before* the final sign of the Son of Man, when he says (Joel, 2: 30-31):

"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire and pillars of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the great and the terrible day of the Lord shall come."

So too in Revelation (6: 12) the same celestial signs are recorded as occurring in the same divine order, namely under the sixth seal, just before the seventh under which the Lord comes in glory at the end.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."

This portentous and awe-inspiring sign in mid heaven warns them that are wise that but one more sign is left till the end. It quickly follows. What is it? Verse 30 of our chapter answers—

"Then (that is after the celestial signs) shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven."

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The Second Advent.

After the sign in the heavens "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven." The verse may have a double construction. It may mean that the Son of Man is Himself the last sign. Or it may be quite possible that there is a sign of the Son of Man immediately before He Himself breaks from the heavens in dazzling glory. Shall there be such a sign? Shall the same star that blazed in portentous splendor over the hills of Bethlehem break forth in sudden glory again? Shall the glory of God suddenly fill the heavens as it filled them before the amazed vision of the trembling shepherds? Shall the awful symbol of His love and suffering which reared its blood-stained silhouette upon the dark hill of Calvary now shine forth for one unspeakable moment upon the gaze alike of men who have rejected the cross of Christ and those to whom it is the most precious symbol the world possesses? We know not. But whether the verse means that there shall be such a preceding sign, or whether not, certainly it is but a near

swift and splendid fore-runner of Himself, who now breaks forth from within the veil and appears "apart from sin unto salvation." But not now a buffeted, scorned, thorn-crowned One bleeding out His human life under the mad scoffs and scorn of a jeering mob. Nay,

"His eyes are as a flame of fire: His feet like unto fine brass: His voice as the sound of many waters: His countenance as the sun shining in His strength: on His head are many crowns; out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!"

This is indeed the last sign, this is the sign of the end. Here the age ends. Here shall begin the new one, the golden one of which men have sung, and dreamed, and written, but which no man shall see until they see Him who shall inaugurate its glories and wield the sceptre of its kingship.

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Terse, vivid, authoritative is Jesus Christ's story of the end. The wickedness of all times shall head up in a Man of Sin, even as God's holiness was embodied in the Man of Righteousness. Satan's "time is short" and "his wrath is great." He vents this rage in a fierce tribulation upon the world which from the beginning he has sought to betray and to wreck. God veils the heavens in darkness, the sign of His indignation against sin and of His near and swift ven-

geance upon its malignant author. Titanic forces of evil gird themselves for their final struggle of the age-end. But struggle there is none! As easily as the white hissing lightning leaps from its lair in mid-heaven and shivers to atoms the towering pine, so does He whose coming is as the lightning flash wither to palsied helplessness by "the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming," the braggart false god and king. He who had exalted himself to the heavens is cast into the depths of hell, while angel hands lay hold of and bind the prince of evil through all the golden centuries of peace and righteousness which now bring to a weary world the glorious reign of earth's lawful King, the Prince of Peace in truth. Of that marvelous painting, then, of the age-end which unrolls in stupendous and solemn grandeur in the book of Revelation, this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is the Master's pencil sketch, the simple outlines of which are—

The Anti-Christ and Tribulation.

The Heavenly Sign.

The Second Advent.

Christ's Story of the Age-End

(Continued.)

We have followed the orderly sequence of events and signs as the Lord teaches them in this wonderful chapter. Let us now consider a few of the important single truths scattered through the same.

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The End a Period and a Point.

When we speak of the end of the year we mean both a period and a point. The last day, the last hour, and the last moment of the clock stroke of twelve, each of these is the end, according as we may think of the period or the point. Christ evidently speaks of the age-end in the same way. The period of the end evidently includes all the signs and events which He names as marking the end. The Man of Sin, the tribulation which begins under him and the celestial signs are all included under the period of the end. So the Second Advent of Christ is the *point* of the end. It is the last stroke of twelve of God's clock of this present age. Likewise in the book of Revelation both the seals, trumpets, and vials stretch out over the period of the end. But it is not until the last seal is opened, the last trumpet sounded and the last vial poured out that the point of the end is

reached in the Revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.

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The Thread of the Story.

Many claim that Christ in the picture of this tribulation was describing what took place with the Jewish people at the siege of Jerusalem by Titus and that therefore there can be no future fulfilment of this prophecy. It needs but a moment's thoughtful notice of the manner in which God links these signs together in one chain of successive events to convince us of the manifest error of such an interpretation. Mark how these verses are coupled in time one with another—

"When (v. 15) ye therefore shall see the *abomination of desolation* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand) then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains for then shall be great tribulation....."

"Immediately after the tribulation (v. 29) of those times shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light....."

And then (v. 30) shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

First comes the tribulation. Then "immediately after the tribulation" occurs the darkening of sun and moon. And "then" (the "then"

of sequence) follows the glorious appearing of the Son of Man. It will at once be seen that since the coming again of Christ in glory is immediately linked in time-succession with the close of this tribulation it is utterly impossible that this could be the tribulation associated with the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. A tribulation which immediately precedes the coming of Christ must be one that has yet a future fulfilment.

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The Seeming Triumph of Evil.

So do some view it. But it is only seeming. Apparently it was a great triumph of evil when Joseph's wicked-hearted brethren sold him into hopeless slavery and death. And Joseph did go down into the shadow and darkness of it all. But God brought him out into the splendid victory of deliverance unto kingship. And seemingly too it was a signal triumph for Satan and sin when Jesus Christ was sent to a shameful and agonizing death upon the cross. But out of it came resurrection victory beyond all of Satan's thought in the glory and splendor of it. So here it may seem a great victory for Satan and his vicegerent the Man of Sin to reign with power and malignance during the short years of the tribulation time. But both stand out before the eyes of the world in their exaltation only to be the more shining mark for the swift and sure catastrophe which overtakes them from the hand of God.

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And after all, shall we discard the testimony of Jesus Christ because it points to an apparent triumph of evil? It is like this: Suppose a loved one of yours were critically ill and your family physician assured you that she would soon be entirely well, you would accept his testimony with joy and thanksgiving, would you not? But if he shook his head gravely and told you that loved one must needs pass through a serious crisis before improvement would come, would you reject his testimony and cry "pessimism" because his word of truth was not to your liking? So here, complete victory in this earth is coming for God and His Christ. But shall we reject His testimony because He tells us that this old world must wheel into the shadows before the light breaks in all its glory? Shall we reject it because in this twenty-fourth of Matthew His voice is one of earnest warning rather than quieting assurance? Or because He hangs out here the red-light of coming danger rather than the gleaming white-light of safety? Shall we receive the call of the ship's lookout when it is "all's well," but discredit it when it rings out sharp and clear in the darkness, "breakers ahead!" Christ tells this story quietly and fearlessly. He tells it though it looks like a great defeat for God and righteousness to draw such a picture of the climax of Satan's power. But He tells it with the calmness of a great general who sees his pickets and skirmish line driven in upon him, yet views it all with perfect calm and quietness of spirit.

because he knows the overwhelming and crushing defeat he is soon to inflict upon the enemy. Moreover Christ tells us that these things which shall try men's souls in the days of the age-end are but—

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The Birth-Throes of a New Age.

"And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (vs. 7-8).

Christ makes a striking statement here. When gaunt famine is wasting the earth; when pestilence is reaping its harvest of death; when this earthly ball is quivering and reeling under the terrifying shock of earthquakes, then these things are the "beginning of *birth-pangs*," as the word literally means. As the birth-agony of a mother is but the sure pledge of the nearness of her greatest joy, so these signs in nature, so portentous and dreadful to man, are the sure sign of the coming of a new and glorious day to God's creation. The Spirit says exactly the same thing through Paul in Romans 8:22, "For the whole creation.....*travaileth* in pain together until now." Seeing the convulsions of nature and the calamities which sweep over earth, wicked men's hearts shall fail them for fear of the things that are coming upon the world. But the child of God shall see in all these only the sure harbingers of creation's golden age, the birth-throes of her

coming glory. Out of the turmoil shall be born the holy calm of God Himself, brooding over the regenerated earth: out of the sorrows shall come joy and peace; out of the darkness shall spring light and liberty.

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The Gospel of the Kingdom.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come" (v. 14).

This text is taken to mean that the gospel of the grace of God now being preached must be preached to every individual before the end shall come. Possibly this is its true meaning. But we question it. Recall the ministry of John the Baptist. He came as the forerunner of the King. His work was one of preparation and warning. He kept steadily pointing to the Coming One. His message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Consider how similar to this will be the conditions in the end-time. The great event which shall be looming up before men's minds and overshadowing every other will be the same as that which John taught—the King is coming. He will be coming as King of the Jews. He will be King of kings and Lord of lords over the earth. How natural then that in the age-end this coming King and the glad tidings of His kingdom, "the gospel of the Kingdom," should be heralded as a witness and testi-

mony to the nations over whom He shall reign in the glory of His kingship. When the King is near at hand for the promised restoration of His Jewish people then the dominant note of the gospel will be one touching that Kingship and the kingdom He is to set up here in the earth. This is not an unfamiliar note. It is simply the note of the Old Testament now taken up and emphasized, probably by believing Jews, because of the near fulfilment of its message. So just as John the Baptist's witness that the kingdom was at hand was the immediate forerunner of the first coming of Christ it would seem that the sounding forth throughout the world of the gospel of the kingdom "as a witness" is the immediate distinctive feature of His second coming. For the Lord Himself says of this witness — "*then cometh the end.*"

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The Searchingness of Judgment.

"Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles (vultures) be gathered together" (v. 28).

These days of the age-end shall be days of judgment for sin. It is of this that our Lord seemingly speaks when He uses this strange text. In Luke (17:37) the thought is clearer from the fuller context. He had been speaking to them of such judgment falling upon sinful men in those days. In answer they said, "Where, Lord?" apparently meaning where should these judgments of God fall upon men. And then He

answers as above. He reminds them how often they had seen the vultures of the air gather in circling flocks over the spot where lay some corrupt carcass on which they were about to descend and feed. Just so wherever the corruption of sin would be found upon the earth there would God's ministers of judgment be to visit His penalty upon it. No place be it ever so secret could hide the sinner from the punishment for sin. As unerringly as the vulture's eye discerned the carcass would the messengers of God discover and visit justice upon the transgressor.

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Swiftness.

"This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled" (v. 34).

What does He mean by this seemingly puzzling sentence? The context seems to make it clear. He cites the fig-tree as illustration. When once they see the buds and bursting leaves, then they know that the march of time to the summer is swift and sure. So here. When once the Anti-Christ is revealed and the fury of the tribulation bursts upon them then the progress to the end is speedy and certain. "This generation," He says. But the "this" is often translated "the same." And that seems to be the meaning here. The same generation which sees the buds will see the figs. So the same generation which sees the beginning of these signs shall live to see

he end, so rapid will be the advance of events from the time of the first ominous sign until the Lord Himself shall appear. Evidently, therefore, when our Lord says "this generation," it is not the generation He is talking *to*, but the one He is talking *about*, which He has in mind.

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Imminence.

The entire setting of this story is Jewish. It is the Jewish Messiah telling His Jewish disciples of the destruction of their own Jewish capital by the Roman foe, and then, looking on down the centuries, of the coming of the False King who shall be manifested in the Jewish temple, under whom a fierce tribulation shall break forth with Judæa as its storm center, and the brunt and fury of which shall fall first upon the Jewish nation. He tells them explicitly that before He Himself shall come again this Anti-Christ must first appear, and this tribulation break upon them. It would therefore be plainly contradictory if, having so clearly set this forth, He should in the next breath tell them that He might come at any moment. The two statements are irreconcilable. Whatever then may be the imminence of the Lord's return for the Church—and we do not here consider that—it is clear that, for His Jewish elect, the Lord's return is not yet an event of any-moment imminence. "These things" must come to pass before He shall come, and it is not until these things "begin to come to pass"

that "the time of their redemption draweth nigh." On the other hand, when these things *have* occurred, and this prophetic word concerning the forerunning events has been fulfilled, then there comes a time when there is nothing left between them and His coming. All has been fulfilled. And then at any moment He may break forth from the waiting heavens. Thus for the Jews His coming is an any-generation imminence. For these things may be fulfilled to any such. But it becomes an any-moment imminence to "this generation" which has seen these things come to pass and between whom and His glorious appearing there is nothing left unfulfilled.

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All of these signs of the age-end point forward to Jesus. The deepening darkness is the sure harbinger of the coming dawn. The appearing of the Anti-Christ in the temple is the forerunner of the Christ who shall suddenly appear in His glory. The wrath of Satan in the tribulation days is the certain pledge of the wrath of the Son which is to follow. The turmoil and confusion of the end-time foretell the peace and tranquility which are near at hand. The darkening of the heavens as sun and moon are veiled is but the fore-pledge of the glory of the Lord which is soon to fill them with lightning-like splendor. And the sufferings of creation mark her near-at-hand deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

THE END OF THE AGE

I.

FOR THE CHURCH . . GLORIFICATION

Glorification

"Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. 2, 21 R. V.).

What is the end of the age for the church of Jesus Christ? What is the completion of God's purpose for her here? What does the Word of God teach concerning that end? We answer, first, that—

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*The End of the Age for the Church is not the
Conversion of the World.*

The absolute silence of the New Testament as to such conversion of the world in this age can have but one significance. There is none such taught because there will be none such. If the world is converted when Christ comes, why do the tribes of the earth mourn because of that coming? (Matt. 24:30). If the world is converted when Christ comes why do the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, bondmen and freemen call on the mountains and rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb? (Rev. 6:16). If the world is converted at the end of the age why does Paul say that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on

them that know not God, and punishing them with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord? (2 Thess. 1:7-9). If the world is saved at the end of the age why is it that "the wicked shall do wickedly"; that "evil men shall wax worse and worse," and that "iniquity shall abound," that is, overflow like the waves of the sea? Is this a description of a converted earth? The days of Noah were days of a wicked world in which in judgment "the flood came and took them all away." But Jesus says "so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:37-38). Surely the picture here is anything else than that of a converted world. If the world is saved when Christ comes again, why is it said that wicked men "blasphemed the God of heaven" and "repented not" of their murders, sorceries and other grievous sins? (Rev. 9:21). Why do the tares which the Lord says are the "children of the evil one," exist clear down to the end of the age if the world is converted at that time? If the world is converted when our Lord comes why does that converted world send the saints of God then upon the earth through the fiercest persecution that has crimsoned the earth since it came from the creative hand of God? (Mark 13:19). The reign of Bloody Mary, the horrors of the Inquisition, the martyrdoms of Rome's Colosseum, the Armenian massacres, when a hundred thousand saints went to God, all these pale before the tribulation which comes upon the saints of God in the age-end at the hands of

this converted world! Nay, the end of the age for the church does not bring the conversion of the world. "Christ for the world" is a great truth, for it is the truth of world-wide evangelization. But "the world for Christ" in this age is not true: for it is the error of world-wide conversion. The end of the age finds the condition of the world described in one word. That word is "*mixture.*" Not the church *merging* into a converted world, but *taken out* from a wicked world. Not the good swallowing up the evil, but co-existing with it down to the very end of the age. Not the tares purged from the wheat but growing together with it until the time of the harvest. And "the harvest is the end of the age," says the Master. So until that end this mixture shall continue. Evil men shall wax "worse and worse." Iniquity shall abound. There is not a shadow of teaching either from the lips of the Lord Jesus in the gospels or from the pen of the writers of the epistles that the Lord at His coming again shall find such a converted world. On the contrary:

And the end of the age the Lord Jesus comes again for the glorification and translation of the church out from the world into heaven to be "forever with the Lord."

Therefore—

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The End of the Age for the Church is—

GLORIFICATION.

When the summer sunrise is flooding the heavens with crimson glory and bathing with radiance every face upturned toward it, each broad band of blue and gold which it flings athwart the painted sky points to one focal spot upon the horizon upon which all eyes are centered—the spot at which the rising sun itself is about to burst forth in all its morning majesty and splendor. Likewise is this Book of God filled with myriads of glory-texts. They are the blue and gold light-bands of the Word, for they speak of Royalty and Kingship soon to come. Flooding with fore-glory the pages of the Book they all point forward to one focal spot of splendor upon God's horizon of the end-time upon which all eyes are centered. And that spot is the appearing again of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes in glory and when He so comes His church is to be glorified with Him. Among the many teaching passages upon this vital theme are Thess. 4:13-18, and 1 Cor. 15:50-58. Parts of both are here appended for our careful study.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

In a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Let it be noted that in this age when so many are denying the miraculous in God's Word and God's activities in the world the glorification of the church by the coming of Christ at the end of the age is to be brought about by three of the most stupendous miracles of all time. First:

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The Coming of Christ brings the miracle of
INSTANT RESURRECTION.

"The dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4: 14).

The Thessalonians evidently knew that when the Lord should come again they themselves, if alive, should never see death, but, as we shall presently note, would be caught up into heaven to be forever with the Lord. But they were troubled about their dead. Seemingly they feared lest, when they themselves were caught up, the bodies of their dead should be left behind: lest they themselves should precede the dead. So Paul writes to comfort and assure them upon this point, saying (v. 15) :

"We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall *not precede* (R. V.) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven.....and *the dead in Christ shall rise first.*"

The very first event at the coming of the Lord will be the resurrection of the dead in Christ. It will even precede momentarily the change and rapture of the living. Of God's great trio of miracles it will be the first to come to pass. Words of jubilant triumph over death are these: "*The dead in Christ shall rise!*" These bodies in which we have lived and loved, suffered and served; these bodies in which sin has marred the image of God once stamped upon them; these

bodies which were the tabernacles in which our loved ones moved about among us; these bodies which have gone down at the last into the darkness, gloom and corruption of the greedy tomb; these bodies over which death, the fruit of sin, has wrought its last appalling, and seemingly final triumph—*these bodies shall rise!* Not by all the doubts of skepticism; not by all the jeers of materialism; not by all the disappointed powers of hell itself can they be holden. “This corruptible *shall* put on incorruption.” The darkness of passing years has enshrouded them; earth’s chill and clammy arms have embraced them; the vulture worms of decay have preyed upon their youth and beauty; the consuming elements have done their worst to devour and annihilate them—but *they shall rise!*

“When Christ who is our life shall appear them shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”

Here is a power house hidden away in the heart of a great city. Myriads of steel fibres insulated from the earth bind it to multitudes of electric lights. When the stream of life is turned on at the hidden power house, when the power, as it were, appears, then do all the lights which are bound to it by these threads of steel appear also with it in glory. Instantly that the power begins its journey over these steel highways do the lights all over the city appear in glory. They flash forth from hidden alley-ways; they twinkle like stars upon the pin-

nacles of lofty buildings; they race in fantastic course around the curious electric signs; they blaze in blinding splendor from the great arc lights at the street corners; they illumine the darkness and gloom of underground tunnels and gloomy subways; they fill the very heavens with blinding bands of splendor as the searchlight seeks to rival the glory of the midday sun. Instantly that the power appears, then wherever the lights are hidden they appear in radiant glory with it. So shall it be with the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Instantly that Christ appears then wherever the bodies of His saints are hidden they shall also appear in glory. Glory shall flash forth in the dark chambers of the earth's secret mines and caves; it shall radiate from the watery deeps of the sea: it shall burst from the rent clods of the tomb: it shall light up the gloomy recesses of solemn forests: it shall break forth from the gray sands of lonely deserts: it shall tip the mountain tops with unimagined splendor: it shall flood the little village churchyards with light ne'er seen on sea nor land. When the Head appears each member of the body shall appear in glory too: when the Vine appears each branch shall share the splendor: when the temple of God is suddenly fashioned each living stone in its walls shall be resplendent with the self-same glory.

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The Coming of Christ will bring the miracle of
INSTANT CHANGE.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"
(1 Cor. 15:51).

For the end of the age for the church brings something else besides resurrection. Not all believers shall be resurrected. Because resurrection pre-supposes death. And not all believers shall die. That seems a startling statement. But it is a very plain one in the Word of God: "We shall not all sleep." There will be one generation of believers who will never see death. It is that age-end generation which is alive at the coming of the Lord.

"We shall not all sleep!" Wondrous words are these! What if it should fall to our blessed lot to be of those who "are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." What if we should be the one deathless generation since the beginning when "by one man sin entered into the world and death through sin." To be numbered among the deathless ones—what a victory! No tender hand would need to wipe the death damp from our pallid brow: no sable-garbed train of friends would wend their solemn way to the little village cemetery behind our mortal remains: no funeral service would ever be recited at a grave's brink for us: no voice would cut deep into saddened hearts with those heart-piercing words "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust": no stricken loved ones would go back to loneliness

and solitude to wait the lapse of long and weary years ere we should meet again. The solemn sleep which untold millions have slept in all ages all lands and all ranks, would never close our eyes, pale our cheek, nor still our heart-beat. "We shall *not* all sleep."

But what event does come then to those believers who are alive when the Lord comes again? Here too the Word is clear and simple

"We shall not all sleep but we *shall* all be *changed*. Not all believers shall die. But all *must* be *changed*. "For flesh and blood," says Paul "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." What does he mean? He is talking of the flesh and blood bodies of believers. He divides them into two classes. The bodies of the dead, he calls "corruptible." These cannot enter heaven until they have "put on incorruption," by resurrection. Then there are the bodies of the living, which he calls "mortal." These are to be changed by "putting on immortality" without seeing death. "In a moment" we shall be changed. In a moment this mortality shall be swallowed up of life in a moment He shall change the body of our humiliation and fashion it like unto the body of His glory: in a moment we that are alive shall feel in every fibre of our being the quickening power of Him that raised Jesus Christ from the dead: in a moment the frail natural temple in which we now tabernacle shall be transmuted into an eternal spiritual one: in a moment th

body of sin, weakness and decay shall give place to the body of glory, life and imperishableness: in a moment death shall be trampled a vanquished foe beneath our feet. And all this in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye." In the swift instant it takes for a loving caress, a word of greeting, a clasp of the hand, a shout of victory, in so swift a moment would we be *changed*! This mortal would put on immortality: the law that binds us to earth would give place to one that lifts us into heaven: the body of sin would be swallowed up of life as it merged into the body of glory: and, needing no chariot of fire for our uplift, we would be swept into heaven by the power of God's mightiest miracle of the ages, the rapture of His saints from the sin and sorrow of earth to the glory and blessedness of heaven in the gladdest instant of all time. For the next and last mighty miracle of God would then instantly be wrought, namely—

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The Coming of Christ again will bring the miracle of INSTANT RAPTURE.

For this is the transcendent climax of it all that at His coming again all the returning millions of His own whose bodies sleep in the earth as well as all who are living, watching and witnessing for Him will, by the miracle of rapture, be instantly snatched up into heaven "to be forever with the Lord."

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
Neither have entered into the heart of man the things
which God hath prepared....."

Our eyes have seen some wondrous sights. We lived for a week in full vision of the mighty Matterhorn, rearing itself skyward like a giant monument over the bodies at its base of those who had perished in essaying to conquer its fatal steep. We have loitered for memorable days on the slopes of fair Capri, feasting our soul to the full upon the ever-changing glory of Naples' crescent bay. We have gazed upon the autumn loveliness of the western North Carolina mountain slopes when the sunsets fell upon such splendor of crimson, bronze and gold as was matched only by the glory of sky and cloud in which the orb of day was sinking to rest. We have gazed entranced upon the transcendent loveliness of Como asleep amid the everlasting hills which fringe it, and mirroring in perfect outline and minutest detail the lofty peaks of dazzling whiteness which rear their snowy summits in the flawless blue of an Italian sky.

And our ears have heard some wondrous sounds. We have sat upon a lofty Alpine summit and heard the music of the village bells float up to us from the abyss below, so softened and refined by distance and the solemn silence of the mountain fastnesses as to make it seem to issue from heaven itself. Or we have heard the voice of some human messenger of Christ pouring himself forth in such words of inspiration, power

and call to devotion to Him as made that message seem to come into our heart straight from God Himself. Or mayhap in the quiet of our own thought and meditation there has come from the Book itself, and the Spirit Himself, through no human lips, such a trumpet call to press closer to Christ, and be more and more consumed in His service, as has thrilled us to the innermost depths of our soul and stirred us to eagerest desire for service unto Him.

And so too have many things "entered into our heart." We have gazed upon the crimson glory of a matchless sunset, and seen in fancy the golden gates through which the redeemed host shall some day enter in. We have heard the low sobs of sorrow, and have pictured that unshadowed day when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. We have known the weakness of bodily limitations and dreamed of the day when we might serve the Lord Christ in a limitless sphere and with unfettered powers. We have been conscious of the failures in communion and walk with Him and thought of the time when His servants shall serve Him and shall see His face.

These things and a host of others have our eyes seen, our ears heard, and our minds fancied in the quiet times. But that God should in one marvelous instant of time tear from earth's clammy clasp the corruptible bodies of untold millions of His own, clothing them with glorious

incorruption in the act: that He should touch the mortal bodies of all His living saints with the same quickening power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead so that their mortality should be instantly "swallowed up of life"; and that then He should sweep from earth into the waiting heavens this unnumbered host of glorified ones to be "forever with the Lord"—this is a vision our eyes have never seen, a story our ears have never heard until it burst from the pages of this blessed Book; a miracle our wildest imagining had never fancied. Yet it shall come to pass. Theology may maintain a strange silence concerning it: the scoffs of the worldling may be leveled at it: the indifference of nominal Christians may push it into the background, but it *shall* come to pass. The word of God is full of divine *shall*s concerning it. They are the fiat of God, the unchangeable certainties of the Eternal One.

"The Lord *shall* descend from heaven."

"The dead in Christ *shall* rise."

"We *shall not* all sleep."

"We *shall* all be changed."

"We that are alive *shall* be caught up."

"So *shall* we ever be with the Lord."

The Blessed Hope

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

One summer morning we were awakened at a very early hour. The first faint flush of dawn was painting the horizon. Back of the mountain summit a strange light was shining. As seen through the patches of foliage in the treetops it seemed like a brilliant electric arc light. The swaying leaves caused it to shimmer and gleam, appear and disappear with puzzling regularity. By and by it reached the sky-line. As it tipped the treetops a stray telephone wire moved across its face, bisecting it like the cross-hair of a telescope. In a moment it had shaken itself free, even from this partner, and stood out sharp and clear in all its beauty above the scarp of the mountain. And then as it flooded the scene with light like molten silver we recognized the day-star. Never had it seemed so large, so radiant, so flooded with glory as when it broke forth from the forest that summer morning in a new and strange place to us, and with unfamiliar and unaccustomed surroundings.

So, emerging from the pages of this Book of God, is the splendid truth of the return of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to this earth. It shines with the coming glory of Him who says of

Himself, "I am the bright and Morning Star." Prejudice and dullness of spiritual vision have hidden it from the eyes of multitudes. But the cross-hairs of God's telescope of prophecy are centered upon it as the supreme and absorbing event of the end of this age. It has grown in beauty and radiance to God's own children until now it fills the horizon of their thought and expectation as never before, and God calls upon us to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Concerning it, let us note first that—

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It is the Hope of the Word.

Throughout the entire New Testament the one supreme hope to which the heart and mind of the believer is constantly turned is the return of His Lord and his own glorification with Him. We cite but a few of the many passages pointing to it:

"Looking for that *blessed hope*, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear in glory" (Col. 3:3-4).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And

every man that *hath this hope in him* purifieth himself (1 Jno. 3:2-3).

Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7).

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It is the Hope of the Heart.

It is now more than eighty years since the emancipation of the slaves of the British West Indian colonies. Historians tell a beautiful story of this momentous event. The day set for their emancipation was the first day of August. The night before, many of them, it is said never slept at all. Their hearts were so eager with expectation they could not close their eyes. Thousands of them gathered in their places of worship for prayer and praise to God for bringing to them this freedom. Some of their brethren were sent to the nearby hilltops to view the first gleams of the coming dawn. These reported by signal to the waiting ones below when the dawn of the fateful and jubilant day was breaking. Day of all days was it to them, when they should pass from the thralldom of human ownership to the

liberty and independence of the new life. Who can picture the hope that thrilled their innermost hearts as they watched for the dawn of that day.

Likewise a great emancipation day is coming for the children of God. The enthrallment of sin is to be forever broken; infirmities are to give place to infinities; corruption is to be changed to incorruption; mortality is to clothe itself with immortality; feeble and changeable fellowship is to be transmuted into endless and unbroken communion with our Lord; limitation and imperfection of service is to give way to boundlessness and perfectness of ministry throughout all eternity. And all this is to come with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the supreme and unerring witness of the coming of our Lord is the Word of God. The Spirit tells us (2 Peter 1:19) that

"We have a more sure word of prophecy unto which ye will do well to take heed."

To this Word of prophecy we are to take earnest heed. As we brood, meditate and pray over it, the blessed hope will become increasingly real and precious to our souls. And the witness of the Word of God is, as we have seen, most clear and emphatic as to this great truth. But by and by is to come another witness. For we are admonished in the same verse above that we are to take heed to this word of prophecy *"until"* a certain time. Until what?

"Until the day dawn and *the day-star arise in your hearts.*" Jesus Christ is the Day-Star. "I am the bright and Morning Star," He says of Himself.

These West Indian slaves, when they saw the first streaks of dawn of their day of freedom, sent back witnesses to their fellows that the long looked for moment was at hand. So, just before Jesus appears, the witness in the Word to the blessed hope will culminate in a special witness in the heart. Just before He comes, God will give to us an overwhelming jubilant, intense consciousness that Jesus is about to break forth from the heavens which have so long contained Him. The Spirit of Christ within will witness to our spirit that the moment has arrived. The Day-Star will arise *in our hearts* as the fore-running witness of His rising in the heavens. God will give to us a fore-thrill, as it were, of the power of the Spirit of glory which in a moment more shall transform the bodies of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory.

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It is the Hope of Heaven.

"Being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20: 36).

Do you remember our Lord's wondrous statement about these resurrection bodies when the Sadducees tried to entrap Him by one of their foolish questions? They had supposed the case

of a woman having seven husbands in succession and then sought to bring Him to confusion before the multitude by asking Him whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Back came His marvelous teaching that in heaven there would be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but that all of God's children would be "children of the resurrection." Do you note that striking phrase and its significance? Plainly it is this. Marriage was given by God for the perpetuation of the race. Through its holy relationship children are born into the world with their natural bodies. The pangs of birth and the long, slow years of growth fashion these natural bodies of ours. But neither marriage, nor natural birth, nor the long progress of years will be needed to fashion the new, glorified bodies of His redeemed children. That body is fashioned in an instant, the glory-instant of the resurrection. It needs no human union for its creation. It leaps into being at the supernatural touch of God's resurrection power. Heaven shall be filled with a new race of beings, who, as to the body, will flash into it in a second of time, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." It shall be peopled with millions of glorious bodies of God's children which were never born in human wedlock. Thus they are "children of the resurrection." And heaven itself is waiting for the blessed hope of the Lord's coming which shall bring to it myriads of its children whose bodies are swift-born b

the Spirit of God from the womb of the resurrection of glory.

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It is the Hope of Creation.

"For the earnest expectation of the creation *waiteth*" (Rom. 8: 19).

"The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8: 2).

God rears the mighty oak through years of patient growth, yet though it stands for centuries it crumbles at the last under the touch of time and decay. God fashions the lilies in all their grace of contour and stainlessness of white, yet they nod and sway for but a few passing days until corruption withers and lays them low. God carpets the mid-summer field with miles of pink and fragrant clover-bloom, but decay prostrates it in sere and blackened death upon its mother earth. All of nature's beauty and grace which the spring breeze breathes upon in its unspeakable loveliness, the winter winds find lying in death and hopeless decay. But the creation is to be delivered from this bondage of corruption into the "glorious liberty of the sons of God." As the sons of God shall be set free from death and corruption, so also shall nature. She shall blossom and bloom in perennial beauty and undecaying glory. The earth itself is to share the deathlessness of God's own children. Hence the beautiful personification of the physical creation itself "waiting for the revelation of the sons of

God" because that creation itself is to be delivered from the same limitation of death and corruption that now fetters and hampers the physical being of the sons of God themselves. The flower shall no longer fade; the grass shall no longer wither and be cast into the oven; the giant oak shall not then crumble into the dust of decay. No wonder then that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). For when Jesus shall come again physical creation shall share the same glorious deliverance from death and corruption which come to God's own.

The exact thought of John 1:11 is: "He came unto His own (things) and His own (people) received Him not." The sea yielded to Him and bore His sacred feet in triumphant disregard of all its laws. The fish crowded into the nets of His disciples at His word of command. The loaves changed, and multiplied and fed the perishing thousands as He brake them. The winds ceased from their wild and boisterous sway as He spake to them. The sea ceased to rage and threaten His fearful followers, and sank into peace and quiet when He spoke. All His creation received their Lord and confessed His power. But His own people received Him not. So here there is a touch of pathos in this word that the whole creation of God is waiting for the coming of His Son while that hope has slipped from the hearts of so many of His people.

It is a Blessed Hope.

The man who cherishes this hope at once throws himself open in the popular mind to the charge of pessimism. Men say he looks upon all things with sober, sombre view. There are no sun-tipped mountain peaks of promise for him: all is shrouded in darkness and gloom. But there could be no greater mistake. For the Word of God calls the hope of the Lord's return a "blessed hope." That is a "happy" hope, as the word literally means. It brings joy to the heart of the believer. It gladdens the soul of him who cherishes it. For there is no truer optimist than the man who is looking for His Lord to come. True, he, as none else, realizes that dark and perilous times are coming. His Guide-Book warns him there are breakers ahead for this old world of ours. He knows that Jesus Christ's statement about it is not that it is growing better, but that "the whole world lieth in the evil one" and is rapidly nearing the fiercest crisis of all its history. But none of these things move him. Being forewarned he is forearmed. And being forearmed he knows no discouragement because of conditions or circumstances. For back of all the sombre shadows of coming days, looms up the glorious figure of His coming Lord and King, whose victory is as certain as the eternal Word of God can declare, and the eternal love of God bring to pass. His hope is therefore indeed a blessed hope. It is sure and steadfast.

It steadies his heart amid the most trying and desperate circumstances. And it inspires him to service, too, with new zeal and fidelity. For that this blessed hope of the Lord's return "cuts the nerve of service" is but another one of the manifest fallacies which find birth in the theories of its critics instead of the lives of its lovers. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It stimulates to fervent zeal and earnestness for lost souls as they who cherish it do well know. Almost to a man the great evangelists and soul winners of the age are lovers and preachers of the blessed hope. Spurgeon, Moody, Chapman, Torrey, Sunday, Whittle, all have cherished with warm and earnest hearts the hope of the again coming of their Lord. The greatest coterie of Bible teachers this continent has ever seen, the men of the famous Niagara Bible Conference were given up wholly and fervently to this truth. Brookes, Scofield, Erdman, Moorehead and Parsons—every man of this quintet of princely teachers found joy in believing and in propagating the blessed truth. And not only these, but thousands of God's messengers in the mission field testify to it as one of the mighty inspirations of their lives to eager, incessant service. If that great truth makes day-dreamers and star-gazers of men, then it is strange indeed to find Jesus Christ Himself exhorting His own, as they serve, to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord."

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It is a Purifying Hope.

"He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself."

Years ago we were standing with a friend on the deck of a great ship. We had both been abroad for a year. And now our ship's prow was pointed toward the homeland. As we stood we talked of the wondrous sights of that memorable year. We saw again the glory of Switzerland's sun-tipped peaks: we heard the murmurous surf of the Mediterranean; we walked through famous galleries and feasted our eyes upon paintings and statues of world-wide fame and matchless beauty; we stood upon lofty mountain summits where the whole world seemed to lie at our feet; we wandered by the banks of lakes and inland seas which would be a never-ending dream of loveliness in all the years to come. As the moments went by, the more we talked, the more enthusiastic we grew. But we were forgetting something. It was the homeland. We needed something to turn our hearts thitherward. And presently it came. God laid His hand upon sea and sky in one of the most gorgeous sunsets our mortal eyes had ever beheld. A lake of gold, fringed with meadows of blue, lay embosomed in the evening sky. Above it over-arching clouds flooded with silver radiance formed a gateway through which the setting sun poured the splendid light of parting day. Through this gateway in the golden west our good ship seemed

to be sailing onward. And then came a rush of joy unspeakable. Back of the golden gateway of glory through which we were sailing was—home! Then a great hope swept into our hearts. It was a hope that went out to the homeland, and the dear ones there. And as it laid hold upon us with imperious sway everything else was swept out. The beauties of Italy and Switzerland were forgotten in the unspeakable joy of *hope*. And we learned that day as never before the searching, separating, expulsive power of a blessed hope.

So it is with us who are God's children. We are drawn unconsciously into the swift stream of the world's thought, activity and power. We live, move and toil amid intensely worldly surroundings. Engrossed in these we forget something. We forget that it is the things which are unseen that are eternal. So God thrusts into the horizon of our daily thought and meditation this blessed hope of our Lord's return. And amazing indeed is its separating power in the life. It is an other-world truth. With a tremendous tug upward, it lays hold upon our thought and spirit. It has a special blessing pronounced upon its study (Rev. 1:3). And any child of God who comes to know and love it is at once conscious of the nature of that blessing. Its searchingness and effectiveness in separating us from the power of worldliness in our lives is astonishing to us as we realize how vain our

own self-efforts have been to accomplish this longed-for result. This wondrous power to purify and detach the heart from worldly engrossment is convincing proof that it is God's divinely appointed truth for effecting that purpose in the hearts and lives of His children. In very truth is it that "he that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure."

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It is the Only Hope of Victory.

Picture to yourself a great kingdom belonging to a wise and loving king. That king goes away for a long absence bidding his people to occupy until he comes again. While he is absent a strong, hostile king is in possession of the land. That false king is Satan. He holds most cruel and tyrannical sway over the people of the land. Hating with relentless hatred the true king, he ravages the country with all the malignant power he can command. With fiendish hatred he injects into the blood of the people a deadly poison. That poison is Sin. Think of the awful havoc of sin in this world of ours. "For by one man sin entered." That was an awful entrance! Heaven must have wept tears of agony, and perdition held fiendish jubilee on that black day when "by one man sin entered." And what a record it has made! It has swept like a mighty tidal wave for centuries over a world engulfed in its black depths; who shall stay its flood? It has scorched

and consumed like a volcano of flame all that have felt its fiery touch; who shall extinguish its fires? It has eaten like a great canker into the very vitals of all human life; who shall find a healing ointment for its leprous touch? It has stabbed to the innermost heart the innocent and the guilty alike; who shall quench the crimson streams which gush from its murderous wound? And this deadly virus in the soul ceases not from its ruinous work until it has destroyed the body also. For as by one man sin entered, so also came "Death through sin." Sin follows in the wake of Satan; Death follows in the trail of Sin. And what a monster foe is he. He baffles our plans; he blasts our hopes; he withers our strength; he fills our cup of sorrow to the full, and, until Jesus comes, he brings down into the dust of decay and corruption the mortal body of every being that walks God's beautiful earth. Thrice in every century does he sweep a thousand millions of human beings from life to death, from mortality to corruption.

What think you? Can final victory ever come to this earth until this false, usurping king is cast out; this deadly malady of sin healed; and this ruin of body and souls of myriads ended? Surely not. And the final victory over this deadly trio of foes, Satan, Sin and Death, is to be won by the coming and personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor does this imply any failure of the work of the Holy Spirit in this gospel

ge. God never designed that He should finish the work which Jesus alone can complete. The Spirit may deliver us from the power of Satan, but only Christ can banish Satan from this earth. The Spirit may break the mastership of sin in our lives, but only Christ can drive sin from the earth. The Spirit may give us solace and comfort under the stroke of death, but He will never exile that dread foe from this world. All this is the triumphant work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will conquer Satan, banish Sin, and tread Death under foot only after He Himself shall come again to reign in righteousness and universal peace.

THE END OF THE AGE

II.

FOR THE JEW . . . RESTORATION

Restoration

With the church caught up out of the earth into the glory to be forever with the Lord, God has still a people upon the earth for whom He has a plan different from His purpose for the church. That people is Israel. What of the Jews? What is their destiny? What becomes of them at the age-end? What is their history from the time the Lord comes again to this world? In answer, let us note a few facts concerning them. Observe, first, their—

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DISPERSION.

One of the greatest of the Roman historians writing of the tragic events coupled with the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, says that before the city fell a great light was seen in the temple of the Jews and voices were heard in the night crying out, "Let us depart." This, said the historian, was taken by the Romans as an omen that the gods of the Jews had deserted them to their fate. That which a heathen annalist took as a superstitious sign has in very truth become a solemn reality. The glory of God departed from the Jewish people with the downfall of their fated city. The words of the weeping Christ

were solemnly fulfilled, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." The legend of the wandering Jew has become a pathetic fact in their saddened and blighted national life. Scattered from one end of the earth to the other, like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, there is left to them no temple, no sacrifice, no glory. Scoffed at, persecuted, despised, forsaken of God for the time, they stand today a melancholy proof of the inspiration of the Word of God and of the solemn and assured certainty of the judgments which He pronounces upon all sin and rebelliousness in His people.

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PRESERVATION.

"Give me a proof of the Bible in a word" said a great emperor to his godly chaplain. "Sire, the Jew," was the quick reply. And that is a great truth. The preservation of the Jew is a veritable miracle of God. Consider for a moment this remarkable fact. A man lands from a foreign land upon our shores. His children are educated in our schools: they imbibe the spirit of our institutions: they fall naturally into our customs and habits. In a few years they are entirely merged with our own people. Their own nationality has disappeared. Their fathers and mothers are Greeks, Italians, French, Germans. But they themselves are Americans only, with scarcely a trace left of the nationality from which they

have sprung. One generation is sufficient to make this amalgamation as complete as it is marked. But there is one striking exception to this fact of everyday notice. And that is the Jews. Nineteen centuries have fled since they began to wander over the world. Forty generations of them have lived and died. Yet they remain absolutely a separate and distinct people. Their racial characteristics remain the same. They are the only nation upon the face of the earth that has not been swallowed up among the nations to which they have gone. Why this remarkable fact? Why this strange exception to the inevitable tendency to race amalgamation? There is only one explanation. This is God's own miracle. He has a divine purpose in the future for them, and He is steadily preserving them for its fulfilment. That purpose is plainly their

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RESTORATION.

One summer afternoon there came into my home an aged Jewish peddler. The day was fiercely hot. The venerable man was bowing under the burden of an enormous pack upon his back. Dropping this upon the floor, he sank into a chair in utter weariness, mopping the beads of perspiration from his heated brow. My sisters ministered to his needs in some simple refreshment. Then as he sat there resting a bit, I fell into conversation with him. He was a German

Jew, and, with my limited knowledge of his tongue, I made rather poor headway in maintaining my part of the fellowship between us. I talked to him of Christ, but all I could get from him was the repeated avowal that Christ was a good man, and nothing more. Then I began to press upon him the great truth that Jesus was the Messiah, that He was the fulfilment of all the prophecies in which both my friend and myself were believers: that He was not only the Christ whom I, a gentile trusted, but was the Messiah of the Jew, the Anointed One promised of God and to be the King of His Jewish people. And then as the aged man turned to me with tears in his eyes, lip quivering with emotion, and pathos indescribable in his rich voice he said brokenly, "*Messiah kommt noch*"—"Messiah shall yet come." A rush of compassion swept into my heart. Life with all its weariness and suffering for him was near its end, yet in his heart still burned the hope of the coming of the One who should be his appointed Messiah and King.

And shall this be true for Abraham's children after the flesh? Shall Messiah indeed come again to them? Shall the government be upon His shoulder? Shall Israel "blossom, and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit?" Shall God indeed restore them to their ancient and beloved land? Shall the nations of the earth be blessed and enriched beyond all imagination

through them? Shall the Lord call them His people and they call Him their God once more? Yea verily, "God hath not cast away His people." The veil of blindness is upon their darkened eyes only for a certain time, and then shall they be restored to a golden age of glory and blessedness of which all the prophets have spoken with burning words of faith, hope, and joyous expectation. The testimony of the Scriptures is clear that:

The Jews shall be gathered from the nations whither they have been scattered: they shall be restored to their own city and their own land: Jesus Christ at His return shall be King over them, and they shall be the favored nation through which God shall pour forth His blessings upon the earth and its nations during the Millennial age.

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The Witness of the Old Testament.

(Jer. 30: 10-11):

10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel; for lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make *him* afraid.

11 For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee, though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee;

but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

Here God calls upon Israel to no longer fear, for He will save His people from afar and from the land of their captivity: they shall return and dwell in quietness: neither will God make a full end of them, although He will overthrow the power of all the nations in which for weary centuries they have been scattered.

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(Jer. 32:36-42):

36 And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence:

37 Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

42 For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

The Lord promises here that He will gather the Jews out of all countries whither He had driven them, and will plant them in the land there to dwell in safety. They are to be His people once more, but now He puts His fear in their hearts so that they will not again depart from Him but will fear Him "forever." And in the following chapter (vs. 14 and 19) He declares solemnly that the day will come when He will perform this covenant, and sooner shall day and night cease to exist than that His word concerning Israel's future restoration and glory shall fail.

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(Ezek. 34: 11-16):

11 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are* scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that*

which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Here God speaks of the restoration of Israel under the similitude of a shepherd seeking and restoring His own sheep. He promises that with tender care He will seek them out from among the nations and gather them from the countries whither they are scattered, and feed them upon the mountains and by the streams of their own land. That which was lost, He will bring back: that which is broken, He will bind up: that which is sick, He will strengthen. He associates David in their rulership, declaring that he shall be a prince and shepherd over them. And that men might not mistake this metaphor of the sheep, God makes it clear that it refers to Israel, by saying (Ez. 34:31), "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are *men*, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."

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(Jer. 23:3-8):

3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

8 But The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

God's wondrous deliverance of Israel from Egypt and its bondage had been the theme of their praise and thanksgiving for centuries. As they recalled the wearisome years of slavery and toil under the lash of the taskmaster and then remembered the outstretched arm and mighty hand of Jehovah which had led them forth to freedom in the promised land, they ever spoke of Him as "The LORD our God which brought us out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage." Nothing could stir their hearts to greater love and devotion, nor their lives to more intense zeal in His service than this phrase which ever reminded them of Jehovah and His love and power toward His own people. But now says the prophet, when the day comes in which the Lord shall deliver His people from the north country and from all the countries of the earth whither they have been scattered, so much more wondrous and mighty will be this deliverance and out-gathering that His Jewish people shall change their song of praise and no longer speak of Him

who brought them out of the Land of Egypt but of Him who "led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither He had driven them." So much greater by contrast will be this deliverance which is yet to come in the days of their restoration.

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(Ezk. 37: 21-25):

21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

24 And David my servant *shall be* king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.

The prophet tells us here of the unity of the nation of Israel when restored. God makes of them one nation in the land of Israel, nor are they longer divided into two kingdoms. "And David my servant shall be king over them" is God's assurance. Some might see clash here

between the kingship of David and the statement that Christ shall be their King. But there is one. For Paul's statement that "the saints shall judge the world," our Lord's word that the apostles "shall sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel," and this assertion here that David shall be "king" and "prince" simply combine to prove the truth that the Lord Jesus' own people shall be associated with Him in rulership during the millennial age, a truth which the Word of God establishes clearly by many other texts than these.

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(Isa. 60: 1-15. Isa. 61: 4-6):

1 ARISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

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9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *their* kings *may be* brought.

12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

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4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks and the sons of the alien *shall be* your ploughmen and your vine-dressers.

6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD *men* shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

This chapter is a rich brocade of golden restoration-promises to the Jews. The glory of God is to be seen upon them; their hearts shall thrill and be enlarged: the abundance of the sea and the wealth of the nations shall flow unto them; strangers shall rebuild their walls, and kings be their servants; the nations that do not serve Zion shall perish utterly; the sons of them that afflicted the Jews shall bow themselves at the soles of their feet; aliens shall be their ploughmen and

ne-dressers, but they themselves shall be called
e priests of the Lord; the ministers of God.
nd in the fifty-fourth chapter of the same
opphet God pours forth a wealth of tenderness
d endearing love for His people as He foretells
e glory and blessedness that shall come to His
mpest-tossed, afflicted ones—

* * * *

*"Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear: break
rth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst
ot travail with child: for more are the children
f the desolate than the children of the married
ife, saith Jehovah. Enlarge the place of thy
nt, and let them stretch forth the curtains of
y habitations; spare not: lengthen thy cords,
d strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread
broad on the right hand and on the left; and thy
eed shall possess the nations, and make the deso-
te cities to be inhabited. For a small moment
ave I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will
gather thee. In overflowing wrath I hid my
ace from thee for a moment but with everlast-
g kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith
ehovah thy Redeemer. For the mountains may
epart and the hills be removed; but my loving
indness shall not depart from thee, neither shall
y covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah
at hath mercy on thee.*

*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not
omforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair
olors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.*

'And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of precious stones. And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children.'

THE END OF THE AGE



FOR THE UNBELIEVING WORLD—

JUDGMENT

THE WORLD AND ITS SINS.

THE WORLD AND ITS KING.

THE WORLD AND ITS KINGDOMS.

The World and Its Sins

"Because iniquity abounds the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12).

The Word of God has much to say of sin in the last days. One of its clear teachings is concerning.

The Aboundingness of Sin.

We were chatting one evening on the street corner of a great city with a Christian policeman. We watched the passing throng of gay, thoughtless, reckless people. Presently the officer turned to us and said—"They say the world is getting better, but if those who say it saw life as we policemen do they would alter their opinions. The Christian people of this city are at home and asleep in their beds by eleven o'clock at night. But the devil is only beginning his work then, and it is after that hour that we see city life as it really is." The policeman's verdict was a true one. Christian men and women do not begin to see the sin that is around them. They live in cultured, refined, sheltered homes. They do not come into contact with the hideousness of sin as it exists in the world. But God's Word says that in these last days it "abounds." It fills and overflows as waves of the sea, as the sweeping flood of the great tide. It saturates,

poisons and degrades myriads of lives which we ourselves touch every day without realizing how deeply secret sin has blasted all that is pure and good within them. And not only are multitudes of lives shot through with sin that is unperceived by us but secret sin as it abounds in the world today has its subtle and destructive effect on the lives and service of Christian men and women themselves. "Because iniquity abounds the *love* of many shall wax cold," is Christ's startling word. Miasm creates a deadly atmosphere of its own. The sojourner in it is chilled and enfeebled without perceiving the secret cause of it. So sin creates its own deadly atmosphere. Its aboundingness in our environment chills and deadens the very love-life of Christians themselves. We are sadly conscious of the waning of that sense of atmosphere of love and power in the assemblies of God's people. We sense it but cannot explain it. If we saw the aboundingness of sin as Christ saw it we would understand more clearly a fact which is so painfully in evidence to all who hunger for the conscious atmosphere of God's presence and love in the gatherings of His people. We would realize that, battle as we may against it, the aboundingness of sin in a godless world and the lives of merely nominal Christians in our midst is a secret chill upon our love and devotion to Jesus Christ. It can only be overcome by a life of prayer, communion and close walk with God that fills our environment with the

other atmosphere which is the sole antidote to this miasm of sin—the atmosphere of His own spiritual presence. Note next—

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The Heinousness of Sin.

“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts” (Rev. 9:21).

Here is a striking text from the Word of God as to the character of the wickedness of unsaved men at the age-end. It shows forth clearly the heinousness of sin at that time. It is a brief list, but a black one.

Murder. This is the sin against life. And an appallingly growing one—it is in these days in which we live. Less than two decades in our own land have witnessed the increase of murders and suicides from twelve hundred to twelve thousand. Human life becomes cheaper every passing year. The laws for its protection have come to be almost a mockery from the failure of their enforcement. A sensitive conscience as to the awfulness of the crime is giving away to a weak sentimentalism toward the criminal. The flowers soon fade upon the victim’s grave, but are kept fresh in the assassin’s cell. The blood-lust grows apace throughout the whole world, and the crime against individual life has become wholesale in the fearful slaughter of war. Two millions of souls hurled into eternity in eight

months of this unprecedented conflict. Aeroplanes in mid-heaven; cannon ball and bayonet upon earth; cruisers and dreadnoughts at sea and torpedo and submarine under sea; all conjoin in taking this fearful toll upon human life. That the last days will be days of carnage is the witness of the Word of God only too sadly attested by the tragic march of current events in these days of world-warfare.

Fornication. This too is a sin against life, as well as against purity. Murder is a sin which takes away life in violation of the law of God. Lust is a sin which brings life into being contrary to the law of God. Therefore it is the yoke-fellow of murder. And it is but one degree less in heinousness. It strikes at the very foundations of society. It tramples under foot the holiest relations God has set up in this world. It withers character, it pollutes the innermost fountains of life, it ravages the home, it plunges its doer into the uttermost depths of degradation in thought, act and life. Its dark shadow covers the world today and will grow deeper and blacker in the age-end.

Theft. This is the crime against property. It springs from that deeper well of "covetousness" against which Christ so solemnly and repeatedly warns His own children. With the blood-lust and the sex-lust, the Word of God couples this gold-lust. It is corroding the hearts and wrecking the lives of untold multitudes of men both in

the world and among those who bear the name of Christ. Graft, theft and dishonesty of all kinds are its natural brood. All these sins which follow in its wake will be intensified in the age-end. For recall that "no man might buy or sell" save he that bears the mark of the Anti-Christ (Rev. 13:17). Behold the wondrous subtlety and cunning of Satan in this. For wealth springs from trade and commerce, but this device of Satan shuts up every avenue of money-making from the business man who will not wear the mark of the beast. He who cannot buy nor sell cannot amass silver and gold. One perceives at once how myriads of men possessed with the love of gold, will yield to the demand to worship the beast rather than give up their idol of wealth. And with lawlessness in full sway in the world, such forms of dishonesty as graft and theft will fill the earth with deeds of violence and wrongdoing.

Sorcery. This is pre-eminently a sin against the Holy Spirit. For it is the sin of fellowship with evil spirits. Men will, in the age-end leave Him who has been sent to "guide us into all truth" and confer instead with demon spirits. Spiritualism is now, and in very truth, an art, but it is black art, and the spirits with whom men communicate are not the spirits of departed loved ones, but of present evil ones. "Try the spirits whether they be of God." Why are we to try them? "Whether they be *of God.*" For

God has His ministering spirits "sent forth to minister to the heirs of glory," but Satan also has his own demon spirits whose malignant aim and work is to deceive, mislead and destroy all who seek fellowship with them. These shall abound in the last days and men will turn away from the living God to "believe a lie" and to "give heed to seducing spirits" who will then fill the world with deceit and falsehood.

The blood-lust, the sex-lust, the gold-lust and communion with demon-spirits shall thus be the quartet of heinous sins which shall especially mark the age-end.

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The Revelation of Sin.

"The mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:7).

Sin is a mystery. That is, it is a hidden, secret thing. It knows its own shame, therefore it hates the light and comes not to it. It loves darkness because its deeds are evil. The vast mass of this abounding sin of which our Lord speaks is unseen. It lurks in the shadows. It burrows in dens of infamy and places of shame. It hides behind blinds, frosted glass and bolted doors. It chooses the mid-night hours and the unlighted gloom of the slums for its chosen orgies. It is always compared with darkness in God's Word, and always and everywhere it shuns God's light, but the day is approaching when all this will be changed. "That man of sin will be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:3), and simultaneously

with him "the mystery of iniquity" will be revealed, or "unveiled" as the word literally means. Sin will then have standing in court. It will come forth into the open. It will tear off the tapestries, unbolt the doors and walk forth into the garish day, the hideous, shameless thing that it always has been. Hiding no longer in dens and resorts it will parade the streets in brazen, spectacular effrontery, unhindered and unmolested. For all that dwell in the world "whose names are not written in the Book of Life" will be worshipping the prince of sin who has come to reign over it (Rev. 13:8). When the Anti-Christ is unveiled then will sin be unveiled and the world will be given over to a riot of bold, unblushing, shameless sin on the street corner, and in the market place, and then God's time will have come. Then God will strike. Then when sin has come forth into seeming triumph over the things of light, purity and holiness; flaunting itself in the glare of day; has unmasked its harlot face and is huckstering its unholy wares in the open, then will come—

The Judgment of Sin.

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord* and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

A revealed Christ from heaven; mighty angels; flaming fire; swift vengeance; everlasting destruction from His glorious presence—such is the vivid picture of God's judgment upon sin. It is at the coming of Christ that this judgment here pictured takes place. His "mighty angels" are the ministers of it. "Wheresoever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28). Wherever the corrupt carrion is, there the keen-eyed vultures descend and consume. So wherever the corruption of sin is, there the swift angelic messengers of Christ will execute judgment upon it. Then will take place separations that shall be swift, irreparable and everlasting. The righteous and the unrighteous shall be divided in an instant by the flash of judgment's stroke. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left." In the midst of ordinary occupations like the lightning flash from heaven shall come that judgment which for all the unsaved shall be "as a thief in the night." The judgment which has been flouted, scorned, pushed off into the future, and scouted as an impossible dream will fall with unerring discrimination and irresistible power and there shall come *not* annihilation, mark you, but that banishing from the "presence of the Lord," which is destruction indeed in its most fearful form.

The World and Its King

The end of the age then, which for the church brings glorification, and for the Jew restoration, will, for the unbelieving world, bring judgment. The kings of the world; the kingdoms of the world; and the unbelieving, gospel-rejecting men of the world will all find the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ to be for them a coming in judgment. Let us note first the World-King and his judgment, for:—

There shall arise in this world, in a future seemingly not far distant, a Man of Sin; a Man of supernatural, Satanic origin; who will be the opposer of God and His Christ; acknowledged by the world as its king, and worshipped by that same world as its God, he shall after a brief reign over the whole earth of unexampled tyranny, power and severity, be suddenly hurled from his high estate of earthly power and glory, to the lowest hell of judgment and punishment by the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ whose place and authority he has usurped. Such a man is the Anti-Christ.

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His Portrait.

Christ is a faithful painter. He gives a striking portraiture of this Anti-Christ, through His servants Paul (2 Thess. 2) and John (Rev. 13)

He who would intelligently know the future will do well to study carefully this canvass of prophecy some day to be hung in the picture gallery of history. We reproduce some of its divine brush-strokes:

* * * * *

(Rev. 13.)

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death: and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast saying. Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and

power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.

* * * *

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three score and six.

He is a Man.

"That Man of Sin be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:3).

John speaks of the "spirit of Anti-Christ." For this reason many think he shall be only a principle of evil; a kind of evil spirit at work in secret in the world. But John also says that the Anti-Christ shall come, referring to him as a person (1 John 2:18). And Paul's description of him is too clear and explicit to mean aught else than a definite, individual personality yet to come into this world.

"That Man of Sin.....the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped:

so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is god."

"And then shall that Wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

These words are too clear-cut a description of a person to apply to aught else. It is not mere influence but a human being who is described here. The Anti-Christ is indeed a spirit but a spirit of evil incarnate in a flesh and blood body. The Anti-Christ is as surely a human being as Christ was the God-man.

Thus the Anti-Christ will clearly be a man. But no one knows who he will be. The Word of God attaches to him a mystic number. It is six hundred and sixty-six. It seems to have double purpose. It is a symbol both of concealment and of revelation. Until he comes evidently the symbolism hides his identity. In past years some have named Napoleon as fulfilling his picture. Others have identified a great ecclesiastical system with the Anti-Christ. But all this is conjecture. We question whether he will be known at all until he comes. Then this symbolism of concealment will become one of revelation. This mystic number will no doubt unmask his identity. Those "who are wise," with the wisdom of the Word of God, will doubtless identify the Man of Sin beyond peradventure by the number which God has given to him.

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He is a Man of Sin.

One day wandering by the banks of the river Seine we came suddenly upon the Paris morgue. At the door hung a frame with the picture of various criminals. There were suicides, murderers, assassins, thieves, violators of womanhood and every other representative of heinous crime. From those faces had vanished every trace of purity and holiness. The image of God seemed utterly obliterated. They were like wild beasts rather than human beings. Never before had it seemed to us possible that such sin as was there portrayed could be so hideously and fully incarnated in human faces. Murder, lust, hatred, sensuality leered forth from what seemed more like demon-masques than faces of men. They haunted us for years afterward.

Such a being shall the Anti-Christ be. As Christ was the incarnation of God's holiness, so Anti-Christ shall be the incarnation of sin. As in Christ dwelt "all the fulness of the God-head bodily," so in Anti-Christ shall dwell all the fulness of Satan. Love, compassion, gentleness, patience, faith, holiness lived in the one. Hatred, malignance, cunning, cruelty and unspeakable wickedness shall tabernacle in the other. His shall be the blackest character that shall ever smirch the page of history; he the most flagrant monster of all the ages past or years to come. The insatiable ambition of a Napoleon; the savageness of a Nero; the blood-thirstiness of a

Robespierre shall meet and culminate in him. The Bible calls him here "the son of perdition." To only two persons does it ever apply those words. They are the Anti-Christ and Judas Iscariot. By this common stigma does it brand these two as co-equals in infamy. It links together the man of blood who betrayed the Son of God, and the man of Sin who is yet to uplift himself against Him. And again as though there were no terms of human-kind in which to picture him the Word calls him (Rev. 13) "The Beast." His whole being shot through with sin; an evil spirit incarnated from the very depths of perdition itself; a ravenous wild-beast devouring and laying waste the world lying at his feet—such are a few of the images in which the Word paints this fierce figure of the opposer of God and of His Christ.

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He is Satan's Counterfeit of Christ.

That is, he is both the imitator and the opposite of the true Christ. He comes up from the pit, even as Christ came down from heaven. He receives his authority from Satan, even as Christ received His from the Father. His reign, from the time of his open revelation, lasts three years and a half, about the same as that of our Lord's ministry upon earth. He is a false king, even as Christ is the true one. He is a boaster and braggart, even as Christ humbled and emptied Himself. He breaks all law, whereas Christ

came to fulfill the law. He controls the wealth of the world, whereas Christ "for our sakes became poor." He is the war lord of the earth, in which Christ came to bring peace and goodwill. He is the opposer of God, while Christ came expressly to do the Father's will. He is the wolf who seeks to destroy God's sheep, whereas Christ is the tender shepherd who came to care for them and give His life for them. He is one of a Satanic trinity, to wit, Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet, just as Christ is one person of the triune God. He is accepted and worshipped by the world; Christ was rejected and crucified by the same. He is hurled from his world-throne at the last; Christ is exalted to His. He is finally abased to the lowest hell; Christ is uplifted to the highest heaven.

* * * * *

He will be The World-King.

The Lord Jesus in rebuking the Jews for their rejection of Him said to them (Jno. 5:43) "I am come in my Father's name and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Evidently this was a veiled reference to the world's false king, the Anti-Christ who was yet to come. Christ, the True King, had come in the Father's name, humble, lowly, gentle, exalting the name and character of the Father, and they had received Him not.

The Anti-Christ, the false king, will come in his own proud name, a boaster, blasphemer and

defier of God, and him the world will receive. That such a King will come into this world and that he shall have power over all the earth is clearly taught in the Word of God.

"Power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" is the plain statement of Rev. 13:7, concerning the Anti-Christ. He is a king of unspeakable wickedness—the Man of Sin (2 Thess. 2:2). He is the persecutor of the saints of God (Rev. 13:7). He has all the power and authority of Satan himself (Rev. 13:2). He works like Satan with the same signs and lying wonders to deceive and delude the world (2 Thess. 2:9). Concerning him let it be noted that—

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He will be the Embodiment of Lawlessness.

"Then shall that Lawless One be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:8).

In all ages past the world's political revolutions seem to have been governed by this law: Men have essayed to overthrow governments simply that they might replace them with others after their own planning and principles. Kingdoms have fallen only to be replaced with aristocracies; these have in turn given away to empires; and empires have been subverted that republics might be founded upon their ruins. But within our own generation a remarkable change has taken place in this almost unvarying law. A

strange, lawless generation of men has sprung into existence as though by magic, whose avowed object is the overthrow of all order, law and government. They would tear down not to rebuild a new and nobler edifice of government, but to desolate and leave in ruins all they have assailed. They do not stop at murder and assassination to attain their sinister end. The bomb, the bullet, the assassin's dagger are their favorite weapons. Their avowed purpose is to bring the world into a place of lawlessness, chaos and absolute anarchy. We call them anarchists. They are the forerunners which represent the spirit and startlingly foreshadow the coming of the Anti-Christ. For he is called by the Word of God, "The Lawless One." That phrase might almost be translated "The Anarchist." For the two words are the same in spirit and essence. One means the foe of law. The other is the foe of government, which is founded on law. The spirit of anarchy and lawlessness abroad in the world today is the very spirit of Anti-Christ. He will indeed be the "Lawless One." For God's universe is founded on law and order. So hating God the Lawless One hates all that springs from God. Hence he will seek to bring to wreck and ruin all that God has made in orderly beauty and method. He will usher in a mad riot of lawlessness. God's law of purity he will trample under the foot of lust and sensuality; God's law which safeguards the preciousness of hu-

man life will give place to murder and assassination; God's law of property rights shall succumb to greed, graft and wholesale theft and dishonesty. He will violate every law of God within reach of his malignant power. Men shall drink to the full the cup of unrestrained personal license and passion, only to find at the last its unspeakable bitterness, shame and degradation.

* * * * *

*He will be the Commercial Monopolist of the
World.*

"And he causeth all.....to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13: 16, 17).

If this striking statement of the Word of God had been called to men's attention years ago the scoffers and unbelievers would have laughed it to scorn. Men would have declared it impossible that such a prediction could ever be fulfilled. "Competition is the life of trade. Commerce is a world-wide activity. No single man or body of men can ever control it. None but the wildest visionary could ever conceive of such a thing as a one-man control of the enormous business enterprises of the world." Such would have been the reasoning of the man of the world. But now the lips of the scoffer are sealed. A startling change

has come to pass in the world's business. Combination, not competition, is now its slogan. Gigantic combinations and trusts have sprung up all over the world and are controlling its commerce. At the beginning men called for their suppression. Now they only ask for regulation. Nor will they ever be suppressed. They have come to stay. What men never deemed possible they are now seeing every day of their lives—single lines of business controlled throughout the world by single individuals. And this will continue until the trade of the world will be in one man's hands, and that one man the Man of Sin. This is one of God's most startling finger-boards of prophecy, one of the most striking signs of the end-time. That which the world deemed impossible is taking place every day before our very eyes. It will all climax as God says it will. "No man shall buy nor sell" save under the permit and power of that darkest figure yet to arise in the world's history—the Anti-Christ. That almost two thousand years ago the prophecy should have been made that the trade of the whole world would be shaped and controlled by one man, and that too, at a time when there was not a shadow of seeming probability of the same, and that now in the generation in which we live business conditions have been so transformed as to make the Bible prediction an easy possibility, this is not only a most astonishing proof of the inspiration of that Word of God but a sober and

striking warning of the near at hand manifestation of that Anti-Christ whose presence Jesus Christ taught to be the crucial sign of the culmination of this age in which we live.

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He will Head the World's Last Great War.

The world today is in the throes of the most awful conflict of all history. The continent of Europe is being devastated by a war whose slaughter is appalling beyond words, and whose final outcome no human wisdom can forecast. So frightful is the carnage, so far-reaching the baleful influence of this titanic struggle that men are already saying it is the last of the world's wars. The sacrifice of human life is so terrible, they say, and the expenditure of human means so enormous that the governments of the world cannot possibly endure the draft upon their resources. So it is freely predicted that of sheer necessity this war will be the last in the world's history, and that peace will perforce be its outcome. But the Word of God does not so teach. This is not the world's last great conflict. For this is a struggle of nations against nations. But the last great appeal to arms in this age will be a struggle between men and God. It will be a war in which the nations of the earth, led by the Anti-Christ, will be confederated and arrayed against the God of heaven. The fourteenth

chapter of Zechariah clearly pictures this last war between God and the nations—

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle.....Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.....and His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives.....and my God shall come and all the saints with thee.”

So too, in Rev. 19:11, etc., when the Lord Jesus comes forth from heaven he comes forth with the armies of heaven *to make war*, as the Word clearly states—

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness *He doth judge and make war*.....and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He *should smite the nations*.”

Then in verse 19 we see the Anti-Christ (“the Beast”) heading the armies of the nations who are

Gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and against His army.”

This is the world’s last great war in this age, and, as its sequence, we note the final point about the Anti-Christ, namely, that—

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His Judgment is Swift and Sure.

His reign upon the earth is short. Revelation (13:5) declares it to be forty-two months. There is every reason to accept this as a literal three

and a half years. That reign is savage, cruel, and pitiless. Then, shortened "for the elect's sake" (Matt. 24:22) it comes to an end at the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus. The sinful, blasphemous, relentless embodiment of the world's hatred and enmity to the true Christ meets his doom in the coming of the real Christ.

"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

are the graphic words which picture his end (2 Thess. 2:8). The word "destroy" is a striking one. It means "to make of none effect" or to render helpless. No definite exercise of miraculous power of the Lord is needed to compass the overthrow of the Anti-Christ. The power and splendor of His glorious presence is alone sufficient to "make of non-effect" the false world-king. And here the picture of the doom of the Man of Sin is like that of one who has been withered by the stroke of paralysis, or smitten to helplessness by the hissing, forth-leaping lightning from mid-heaven. Jesus Christ's consuming presence palsies him in an instant, the instant of His appearing. Thus utterly consumed and destroyed, yet not annihilated, his eternal destiny is seen in the last words of the Book concerning him (Rev. 19:20).

"And the Beast was taken..... and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

The World and Its Kingdoms

The second chapter of the prophecy of Daniel is a remarkable one. It contains the story of the forgotten dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In that dream the king had seen a strange, composite image of huge size and remarkable composition. A few terse verses furnish its description:

(THE DREAM.)

31. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness *was* excellent, stood before thee: and the form thereof *was* terrible.

32. This image's head *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass.

33. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

(THE INTERPRETATION.)

Thou *art* this head of gold.

39. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things*: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the

35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors: and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

36. This is the dream: and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay

42. And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken

43. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

44. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever

45. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold: the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Curious, fantastic and mystical this image might seem to some to be. As a fact it is a clear, simple, picture-story, so plain, when interpreted by God, that a child might understand it. Note some of the important truths which stand out in that picture.

* * * *

This image is God's picture of the kingdoms of this world from the Babylonian empire down to the end of this present age.

There can be no question as to this. For to Nebuchadnezzar the head of the Babylonian empire God, through Daniel, distinctly says "*Thou art this head of gold*" (v. 38). Thus the Babylonian is the beginning of the world-kingsdoms here pictured. Then all the parts of the image which follow are definitely spoken of as "kingsdoms." The second kingdom is of silver. The third is of brass. The fourth is of iron. The legs of the fourth are also of iron, but the feet and toes part of iron and part of clay signifying mingled strength and weakness. Now as we turn to the open pages of human history in the thousands of years that have elapsed since the picture of this image was drawn in God's Word we find a startling and wonderful confirmation to the minutest details of God's statements concerning the course of Gentile government since Nebuchadnezzar's time. After him came the Medo-Persian empire. With the fall of Media-Persia came Greece with its world-conqueror,

Alexander the Great. Then Greece was succeeded by Rome, with its strength of iron and its world-wide dominion. Then the Roman empire was divided into the Eastern and Western empires, as typified in the iron legs of the great image. Afterward from these two branches of that same empire sprung the nations descended from Rome which exist today. Some are strong and some weak, as set forth in the image-symbol of toes of iron and brittle clay.

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The last stage of these world-kingdoms will be that of a confederation of ten kingdoms at the end of this present age.

The image-picture makes this clear. As the head was the beginning of the world-kingdoms so the ten toes are the last stage of the same. They are the same as the ten horns of Dan. 7: 24 and these are specifically declared to be "ten kings" in that passage. So in Rev. 13: 1 we have another picture of the last form of human government under the Anti-Christ and in it also there are ten horns standing for ten kingdoms. It is in "the days of these kings" (Dan. 2: 44) that the downfall of the image comes; that human world-governments end. This confederation of ten kingdoms descended from the Roman Empire is then yet to come, and this suggests a thought at once intensely interesting and sobering. Men are saying "What about this great world-war? Has it been predicted in God's Word? Is there

any special Scripture to designate and identify this terrible conflict through which almost the whole world is now passing?" No prophecy that we know refers to this war save that general one of Christ which is being fulfilled now even as it has been hundreds of times since uttered—"There shall be wars and rumors of wars," but nearly all prophetic scholars believe it quite possible that out from this present war may emerge such a new adjustment of the nations of the world as may bring the world-kingsdoms to that significant number of ten which shall mark the age-end. And very suggestive is it too that even while these lines are being written men high in public life have been assembling in conferences whose avowed object is the confederation of the nations of the world. True the object of that confederation is the preservation of the world's peace by compulsion upon individual nations, but whatever the ostensible aim let the thoughtful reader remember that when he sees the principle of combination in the business and industrial world enlarged to include the confederation of nations of the world he is looking upon one of the significant signs which by God's own Word, presage the near approach of the end of this present age. It may be some great tragedy therefore like the present dreadful war in Europe, which will some future day bring these nations to the exact number of ten kings (Dan. 7:24), symbolized in the ten toes of the image, and

marking the last sub-divisions of the ancient Roman Empire, and when that critical time has come—and no man can say how close it may be—then—

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These world-kingsdoms will be overthrown by a supernatural, sudden, and annihilating blow.

It is supernatural. The stone which smites the image into pieces is said to be “cut out without hands” (v. 34). That is, it is a divine and not a man-made instrument which accomplishes this overthrow. Then in verse 44 we are told that it is the kingdom set up by the God of heaven” which breaks in pieces all these other kingsdoms. And (v. 35) the stone, or kingdom of God, fills the whole earth, consumes all the other kingsdoms, and stands forever. The stone which breaks in pieces the earthly kingsdoms is thus clearly the kingdom set up by God.

It is sudden. The stone strikes the image suddenly and breaks it to pieces. That is the kingdom of God set up suddenly, and suddenly destroys the earthly kingsdoms which it replaces. There is no gradual “Christianizing” of these kingsdoms until the kingsdoms of men being purified and transformed are merged into the kingdom of God. Nothing of the kind. They are struck a swift, irresistible blow, destroyed, and supplanted by an utterly different kingdom, a kingdom which “shall not be left to other people,” but shall stand forever” (v. 44). There is

no succession to this kingdom as with men. For it is the eternal kingdom of God.

It is annihilating.

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35).

A striking metaphor indeed is this, of the utter destruction of human government as represented by the great image. It is swept away as the fierce summer gale sweeps away the feathery chaff from the bare threshing floor. Not a fragment remains. The blow is irresistible; the destruction is complete and irremediable. It is the judgment of God upon the kingdom of men. And no human kingdom shall ever rise thereafter. For the "kingdoms of this world" then become "the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ." This kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. And the glory and blessedness of it vindicate forever the swift, final, and overwhelming judgment of God upon the kingdoms of this world.

The second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is the sudden, supernatural, annihilating blow which destroys the kingdoms of this world. When He comes forth from the heavens "He hath on His

vesture and on His thigh a name written "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 19: 16). Then it is that "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Dan. 2: 44). It is the final kingdom for "it shall not be left to other people." It shall be built not upon the pedestal, but the ruins of human government, for "it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms." "And it shall stand forever."

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This scene in Daniel looks forward toward the end of this present age. What then of the Christian's attitude toward human government during this age? The answer is simple. "The powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13: 1). Human governments have been established by God for the rulership of this present age. They are part of God's plan for it. They safeguard our lives and our liberties. We owe them our allegiance, our loyal support. They are "ministers of God" to us "for good" (Rom. 13: 4). We are to be subject to them (Rom. 13: 1). We are to pray for them (1 Tim. 2: 1, 2). Yet we are to remember that they are limited in duration to this present age. When this age ends at the coming of Christ their place and purpose ends. A new age begins. "The kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ." Human governments of this age are replaced by the government of Jesus Christ in the coming age. Of that coming age we now proceed to speak.

THE AGE TO COME

IV.

THE MILLENNIAL AGE

The Age to Come

With the Second Coming of our Lord is linked the Glorification of the Church, the Restoration of the Jew, and the Judgment of the Unbelieving World. These close the present age. Then follows the age to come, or the Millennial Age. Concerning this period, note first, that—

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It will be earth's Golden Age of a Thousand Years.

It was the boast of one of Rome's greatest emperors that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble. So the Lord says of Jerusalem in the age to come that for brass He will give gold (Isa. 60: 7). And not only for Jerusalem, but for all His earth only the preciousness of gold as contrasted with the cheapness of brass can describe the glorious change that shall come to it from the hand of God in those golden days. Instead of sin righteousness shall fill the earth. Where violence held sway peace and tranquility shall forever reign; where the moans and sobs of sorrow arose, songs of joy and exultant gladness shall fill the days; where war's awful slaughter ravaged the nations of men, peace and good will shall brood over God's restored creation. Injustice shall yield to righteousness, vio-

lence to quietness, hatred and enmity to love and sweet fellowship; and the world shall be at rest under the sway of Him whose dominion shall be from sea to sea and whose reign shall bring peace and gladness to the hearts of the millions who acclaim him King and Lord. It will indeed be earth's golden age of which poets have sung and for which a suffering, sorrowing world has waited through all the passing centuries since its King was crucified and its Lord of glory rejected by His own.

Because the Scriptures represent this age as lasting a thousand years, it is called (from the Latin word "mille" meaning a thousand) the Millennium or the Thousand Years. Some object to taking this as a literal statement of duration of time, because, they say, it is mentioned in but one chapter of the Word of God, the twentieth of Revelation. But in addition to the fact that even a single clear statement of fact by the Scriptures is sufficient for a child of God, note the repetition of this period of time in the self-same chapter. Satan is bound for the thousand years (v. 2); he is loosed for a little season after the expiration of the thousand years (v. 3); the resurrected martyrs reign with Christ the thousand years (v. 4); the wicked dead are not raised until the end of the thousand years (v. 5); those in the first resurrection are said to reign with Christ the thousand years (v. 6); and at the end of the thousand years, the final doom of Satan is sealed (vs. 7-10). Here we have

six distinct references to the reign of Christ upon earth as being a period of one thousand years. If we accept the testimony of man that the present gospel age has continued for nearly two thousand years, why should we not receive the testimony of God that the coming millennial age will last for one thousand? "If the witness of man is great, the witness of God is greater."

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*It will be an age in which Jesus Christ Reigns as
King upon the earth.*

"The Lord God shall give unto Him (Jesus) the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever" (Lu. 1:32-33).

David's throne was upon earth not in heaven, and the promise here is clear and explicit that Christ shall reign over the Jews in the age to come exactly as His father David had done in ages past.

"In the regeneration ye shall sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel,"

were Christ's words to the apostles. An equally clear promise this, that they, in the age to come, should share with Him this very rulership over Israel upon earth, which the angel announced to Mary should come to her son. In Rev. 11:32, the cry from heaven is that,

"The kingdoms of *this world* are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ."

And in Rev. 5:10, the cry of those who have been made kings and priests unto God is, "and we shall reign *on the earth*."

So, too, the kingdom of Christ as seen in Dan. 2:44 is one which succeeds all other earthly kingdoms, and which "*fills the whole earth*" (v. 35).

The picture in Daniel 7:14 is a picture of earthly kingdoms and in it "there was given Him (Christ) dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him." These are earthly peoples and nations, as the context clearly shows, and dominion and rulership over them upon earth is given unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

A clear passage, too, upon this truth is Jeremiah 23:5, in which, speaking of the coming Kingship of Christ the Spirit says:

"I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice *in the earth*."

* * * * *

It will be an age in which The Saints Rule With Christ.

Paul assumes this to be a well understood and most practical truth when he warns the Corinthians against going to law one with another. Not only is it unbecoming to them as Christians so to do, but how unfitting and inconsistent is it that men who were some day to rule the world could not settle little matters of this present life

without litigation. How unworthy would they be for the larger judgeship if they could not judge in such insignificant affairs as these. "For," says he, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"

Christ, also in assuring His disciples of their coming part in this rulership, says to them in a passage already cited,

"In the regeneration, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel."

So, too, Paul, seeking to comfort believers in the midst of afflictions, brings to them as an inspiration and blessed hope the thought of their coming Kingship when he says—

"If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him."

And in Rev. 20:4, concerning the company of sufferers seen there, the same word is said by the Spirit—

"And they lived and *reigned with Christ* a thousand years."

Likewise in the prophecy of Daniel, after the overthrow of earthly governments has been suddenly and swiftly accomplished by the hand of God, we read (Dan. 7:27)—

"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him"

Some find difficulty in trying to conceive the exact relation of the glorified saints to this earth over which they are to rule. But such difficulty is largely speculative and unreal. Let us meet it by an illustration.

We know a Christian man whose home had been broken up by the vicissitudes of life. All the birds had flown from the home nest. The old homestead stood solitary and untenanted. Often as he passed it the flood of tender memories was so overwhelming he would turn his head and look away. But one day something happened to the old home. A beloved friend and kinsman bought it back and began to transform it. And one day when the weary worker came back from his wandering service, he found a transformation. He was ushered into his old rooms. There were his favorite books, easy chair and writing desk all ready for his use. Through a newly cut window streamed the sunshine as never before. All that thoughtful love could provide for his comfort was there. And in the rooms where he had studied, written, prayed and suffered some, he found again a quiet resting place from the rush of the world and the weariness of service and travel. And now the old home is again his home. He does not dwell much in it for he has a roving commission from the King, but he is free to come and go as he pleases and is always sure of the welcome of loving hearts and the ministry of willing hands.

Somewhat in the same fashion will it be with this old earth home of ours. Satan has sown it thick with seeds of sin. He has been reaping for centuries an awful harvest of sorrow, suffering and death. But our Elder Brother has bought it back with His own blood. Some day soon He will come to reclaim it. And how He will transform it! With a new and transcendent loveliness will He refashion it. And then we shall rule with Him in it. We shall sit down with Him on His throne even as He sits upon the Father's throne. We shall "judge the world" with Him. We shall have precisely that relation to this beautified old home that He himself had after His resurrection. He came and went; He appeared and disappeared at will; He was the same, yet not the same. So with us. In glorified bodies we shall be in just such touch and access to this glorious earth as God has planned for us. We shall have such a ministry as we do not now even dream. For us there shall be undimmed vision of God's will; unwearied strength to carry it out; and unlimited sphere in which to make it known in that day when His will shall be done "in earth as it is in heaven."

* * * * *

It will be an age in which Satan is Bound.

That is a tragic hour for this earth when Satan is cast into her from the heavenlies (Rev. 12: 9). The heavens are called upon to rejoice (v.

12) because of that casting out. But to the earth comes the cry—

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

He knows indeed that his time is now short. So his wrath is fierce and vindictive. Into the short three years and a half of the Anti-Christ's reign he crowds that wrath in all its intensity and hatred. He deceives by false miracles; he dominates the world; he persecutes the saints of God; he puts to death whom he will; he rages against the God of heaven and sets up instead his own representative as God. Except the awful time had been shortened human flesh and blood could not endure it. But God shortens it. The coming of His Son brings it to a swift end. And at the end we read (Rev. 20: 1-2)—

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven having a great chain in his hand.....and he laid hold on Satan, and bound him a thousand years.”

Nor need there be any cavil at a phrase so seemingly material as “a great chain.” We can understand how a physical body could be fettered. But none of us can comprehend how a mighty spirit of evil could be bound. So God speaks to us in images and metaphors nearest to our human understanding and most easily grasped by our human minds. For God has other chains than those whose links are brass and steel. He can

bind by His word, His Spirit, His power far more easily than men by linked chains. And that He does so bind the great spirit of wickedness during the whole of the millennium is here most plainly set forth.

* * * * *

*It will be an age in which the Power of Death Is
Restrained.*

The power of death is restrained and broken during the millennium but not entirely destroyed. For we read (1 Cor. 15:15) that Christ shall reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet and that the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. This shows that death does not end until the end of His reign. Also (Rev. 20:14) we see that it is not until the end of the millennium that death is finally destroyed. Over the bodies of glorified believers death of course has no power nor sway, for they are deathless bodies indeed. But that the nations which pass into the millennial age of the earth are still subject to its power, albeit restrained and limited, is shown by such passages as Isaiah 65:20. Here the statement of the Word is,

“For the child shall die an hundred years old.”

The child “shall die.” Here evidently is death. But the other statement is still more striking. The child shall die “an hundred years old.” A hundred years now is the extreme limit of in-

firm and exceptional old age. Yet in this millennial age one dying at an hundred years is called "a child." This is a multiple of eight or ten times the age of a child now and shows that adult human life in the same ratio may reach even the duration of the millennial age. In the world's first golden thousand years, ere sin had reached its climax in the curtailment of human life, men lived for centuries. Genesis tells us of contemporaries of Adam who lived between nine hundred and a thousand years. So it would seem from this word in Isaiah that when the power of sin is broken and that of death with it, human life will increase to that of earth's early golden days. For while one dying at a century of years is yet a child, those who live unto old age shall fill out the full measure of centuries of ripened life, or

"There shall be no more thence an old man that hath not filled his days."

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It will be an age of Universal Peace.

Human wisdom has been confident and insistent that this is to be an age of world-wide and unbroken peace. Hague conventions, arbitration treaties, the advance of civilization, and the like are cited as the certain assurances of peace in this present age. But these prophecies have had a sudden and disastrous set-back. Suddenly and without the slightest warning has broken

out the bloodiest war of all recorded history. The nations of half the world are slaughtering each other by the millions and spending two thousand millions of dollars a month in the deadly process. Yet even this has not disillusioned the prophets of peace. For now it is asserted that this war will be so dreadful in its cost of men and gold that at its close nations will be obliged to disarm from sheer necessity and exhaustion.

As against all this stands the unerring testimony of Jesus Christ Himself, who, as He sat upon the Mount of Olives talking to His disciples, pointed down the long vista of approaching centuries and assured them that the unvarying mark of every one of these until the end should come was :

“There shall be wars and rumors of war,
Nation shall rise against nation,
And kingdom against kingdom.”

Christ's word is changeless and unerring. War, and not peace, shall be the distinguishing mark of the rest of the age. Its scroll of history yet to be unrolled shall be crimsoned with the blood-marks of savage war even as has that of the past.

But when Jesus comes to bring this age to an end, then shall peace come with Him. The advent of the King of Peace shall usher in the kingdom of peace. For that the coming millennial age shall be one of universal peace is the testimony of all the prophets who have written

of its coming glory. A few of these testimonies are appended—

In Isaiah 9:6, in addition to the other wondrous titles of Jesus as King, He is called "The Prince of Peace." In the Seventh verse it is said:

"Of the increase of His government and of *peace* there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it."

An endless peace is here predicted for the Lord's reign. And note that it is clearly of His earthly kingdom for it is "upon the throne of David" that his government and its attendant peace is pictured.

In Isaiah 2:4 we have this word—

"He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

That the weapons of war shall be beaten into implements of peace and that nation shall not learn war against nation any longer is clearly a prophecy of the peace and blessedness of the age to come. Otherwise our Lord's statement to His disciples that there should be "wars and rumors of war" until the end of this age would be in clear clash with the prophet's word in the above passage. Surely there is not the slightest indication in these days that nations are no longer learning war. They have learned it to such a

degree of destructiveness and bloodshed as the world has never seen in all its history.

* * * * *

*It will be an age of Great Temporal and Spiritual
Blessing.*

The useless and noxious in nature shall give place to the useful and beautiful. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree and instead of the brier the myrtle (Isa. 55:13). The earth shall become so fruitful for the husbandmen that he who is reaping the harvest shall be overtaken by him who is preparing the ground for the new one; "the plowman shall overtake the reaper." Deserts shall be transformed into gardens of beauty; the "parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water (Isa. 35:7). The savage nature of the wild beasts shall vanish. The wolf dwells with the lamb upon whose kind he once preyed; the cow and the bear feed together; the lion eats straw like an ox, and a little child leads these savage beasts as it would its household pets (Isa. 65:6-7). Over the dens of once deadly serpents little children play with impunity and fearlessness (Isa. 65:9). With human life so prolonged, and so many generations overlapping, vast multitudes shall people the earth as the prophet plainly declares (Ezk. 36:10-11; Zech. 2:4). And to His own earthly people, the Jews, God will increase great wealth; for brass He will bring gold; for iron, silver, and for wood, brass (Isa.

60:17; Isa. 61:6). Earth shall blossom in perennial beauty for it shall be delivered from the corruption of physical death, into beauty and glory (Rom. 8:21). The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). The fullness of Israel in that age shall bring greater spiritual riches to the world than has even come in this, the time of their fall (Rom. 11:12). The presence of the Lord shall be as rain upon the mown grass (Ps. 72:3) and men shall bless themselves because of Him (Ps. 72:17).

* * * *

*It will be an age which at its finish merges into
the Endless Ages of Eternity.*

The Millennial Age is God's last test of man. All the world comes under the dominion and Kingship of Jesus Christ. But even then evidently not all the world is converted. For at the end of the age, Satan is "loosed out of his prison" (Rev. 20:7). He goes forth to "deceive the nations." The unregenerate human heart proves itself the same hopeless, helpless failure. Men revolt against God and His Christ. Judgment falls once again from the God of Heaven (Rev. 20:9). Satan meets his final doom of the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). The earth is then purged by purifying fires (2 Pet. 3). John sees a "New Heaven and a New Earth" (Rev. 21:1). With them begin the everlasting Ages of Eternity. The chasm between heaven and earth is

forever bridged. The separation of men from God is at an end for "the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21:3). Human hearts no longer break; human eyes no longer weep. Suffering forever ceases; the curse upon the earth is lifted; God's servants serve Him with joy and gladness, and "see His face" as never in the olden days of sin and darkness. Night vanishes from this glorious new creation, for God Himself is the light of the universe. And through the endless ages of eternity His servants reign with Him in a kingdom of peace, righteousness and unspeakable glory. With exquisite beauty does His Word set forth these truths in the last two chapters of Revelation—

* * * * *

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away....."

"And there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever."

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